

Mumps

What is mumps?

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus that can cause swelling and soreness of the salivary glands (the cheek and jaw area) along with fever.

What are the symptoms of mumps?

Mumps usually causes swelling of the glands under the ears or jaw (called 'parotitis'). Other symptoms include fever, headache, general aches, and muscle pains. Symptoms can last for 7 to 10 days. Some people with mumps may not have any symptoms. Others may feel sick but not have swollen glands.

Is mumps serious?

In most people, mumps is mild. But in some people, it can cause serious, long-lasting problems. Mumps can cause meningitis (swelling of the brain and spinal cord), deafness, orchitis (swelling of the testicles) in males who have reached puberty, or oophoritis (swelling of the ovaries) in females who have reached puberty. In rare cases, mumps can cause inflammation of the brain itself, known as encephalitis. Mumps infection during the first 3 months of pregnancy may be linked to miscarriage. Mumps rarely results in death.

Who can get mumps?

Mumps can affect any person of any age who has not had the disease or been immunized against it.

How is mumps spread?

The mumps virus is found in the saliva and fluids from the nose and throat of infected persons. It is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also be spread by kissing, sharing items, such as cups or eating utensils, and touch objects or surfaces with unwashed hands that are then touched by others. A person can spread the mumps virus 2 days before through 5 days after onset of parotitis.

How soon can symptoms start after being infected with mumps?

Symptoms usually appear 16-18 days after infection, but this period can range from 12-25 days after infection.

Is there a treatment for mumps?

There is no specific treatment for mumps. Most people with mumps recover completely in a few weeks.

Can a person get mumps more than one time?

People who have had mumps are usually protected for life.

Is there a vaccine for mumps?

Yes. Mumps vaccine is given on or after a child's first birthday, and is usually given as the MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccine. A second dose is recommended at 4 to 6 years of age. One dose of MMR vaccine is 78% effective, and two doses of mumps vaccine is 88% effective. While mumps vaccine is effective, it's not perfect. People with two doses of MMR vaccine can still get mumps. All unvaccinated teens and all adults born in or after 1957 should have documentation of vaccination or other evidence of immunity. Adults born before 1957 in the United States are likely to have had mumps as a child and are not generally recommended to receive vaccination. Many foreign countries do not routinely advise or require mumps vaccination.

How can I prevent the spread of mumps?

The best way to prevent mumps is to get the mumps vaccine. Persons exposed to mumps should check their immunization status and call their healthcare provider if they develop symptoms of mumps. Persons with mumps should stay home from child care, school, or work for a total of 5 days starting on the day of parotitis onset until the sixth day after symptoms appear.